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Betty and The Bear.

By FRANCIS A. COREY.

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And this young giant from the woolly west was her employer! Betty gave an involuntary gasp. He was so elemental, so unlike any one with whom she had ever come into close personal contact before.

"I've dubbed him the Bear," Mr. Henderson, whose desk was next to her own, confided to her. "He's straight from the Rockies, you know. And then he is so big, so brutish, so ungainly! Looks as much out of place in a New York office as a bull in a china shop."

Henderson himself was slender, handsome, polished, immaculate of attire. Betty's glance rested upon his smug, clean shaven face approvingly. His well bred tones were indescribably soothing after the hoarse rumble of Mr. Sterling's deep bass. She was rejoiced to find one congenial person in this place where the failure and sudden death of her father had left her stranded.

"There are reduced gentlemen as well as reduced gentlewomen," she thought, with a feeling of womanly sympathy for him that later on found expression in unexpected ways.

For instance, although short to courtliness with her employer, she would linger after hours for a friendly chat with Henderson and even permitted him to take her out to dinner once or twice.

One day when they were alone in the office Henderson swung around in his revolving chair and said abruptly:

"Miss Vandevere, did it ever strike you as a bit strange that the Bear should have given you the best berth in the office? This is your first experience, and good stenographers are as plenty as blackberries."

"Are they?" Betty answered. "I didn't know."

"Do you mind telling me how you happened to apply to him?"

"I received a marked copy of his advertisement and wrote immediately, asking for the place."

"Hm! And got an answer by return mail, saying you might report for duty?"

"Why—yes—so I did. Is that so very surprising?"

"Oh, no," Henderson meditated a moment, a queer little spark flashing into his eyes. "See here! I'm going to tell you something," he announced abruptly. "The Bear is in love with you."

"Absurd!" Betty cried, reddening painfully.

"I know the signs. Watch him. You'll see for yourself. Can't come high you without flushing and trembling. Genuine case of love at first sight. I guess he knew what he was about when he took you into his employ."

"How can you say such things?" Betty was indignant. She realized for the first time that there was a vein of native coarseness under the man's veneer.

"A pile of money comes into this office," he said after an interval, looking at her keenly. "The Bear is beastly rich. That counts for a good deal. You'll marry him for his wealth."

"A cowboy from the plains? Not if he were made of gold!"

Henderson looked relieved, but before he could reply Mr. Sterling came into the office.

Betty bent over to her desk with a scarlet face. When, presently, she ventured to steal a glance at her employer she encountered his fixed gaze and knew from the look in his eyes that Henderson was right.

The thought that this uncouth westerner dared aspire to a Vandevere made her furious. Later on, when an errand took her into the inner office, whither her employer had withdrawn, she made all possible haste, but he spoke to her before she could slip back again to her place.

"Miss Vandevere, one moment, please. You are looking pale. You are not used to such close application. You'll make your self ill. I have a box at the opera, but I seldom go. I'd be more than pleased to have you use it."

Betty's breath had stopped, and she recovered it with difficulty.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Sterling," she said feebly, "but I must decline to take advantage of your kindness."

She fled with hot cheeks, but at heart she was not so angry as she tried to make herself believe. She knew intuitively that the offer had not been prompted so much by a desire to win favor as by real solicitude for her welfare.

Further proofs of the big man's thoughtfulness were forthcoming. That same evening, on returning to her boarding place, she was met by a smiling landlady.

"See what's come for you, Miss Vandevere!" The woman triumphantly held up a basket of delicious fruit.

"Who sent it?" Betty asked, searching for a card.

None was to be found, and Mrs. Fyrit could only tell her that the basket had been left by a messenger boy. Not one of her fair weather friends knew her present address. Naturally she thought of Mr. Henderson. For some time there had been a growing tenderness in his manner toward her. When the anonymous gifts continued to appear daily she took occasion to remonstrate with him.

"Household grapes are expensive luxuries," she said. "Don't send any more. You can't afford to."

"Miss Vandevere, allow me to correct

a wrong conclusion. I have not presumed to send out grapes or anything else."

"Who did?"

"If I may hazard a guess—the Bear!" Betty was so angry that she marched forthwith into the next room, where her employer was busy at his desk.

"Mr. Sterling," she cried, "it's an impudence for you to make me present! The fact that I work for you is no excuse."

He looked disconcerted.

"I hoped—you wouldn't know—the riddle from me."

"Why did you do it?" she demanded hotly.

"You're not used to making your own way—of course you miss things. And then, I knew your father, and I wanted to help you for his sake."

She stared half incredulously.

"You knew papa? When? Where?"

"In San Francisco—last winter. We met in a business way and got to be friendly. He liked to talk about you, and once he showed me your picture. So you seemed like an old friend from the first."

Betty's eyes had been opened, but the look of annoyance did not leave her face.

"I can supply my own wants. Please do not send anything more," she said, and, with her head held high, went back to her post.

Henderson glanced up indignantly, his face revealing half a dozen impulses in as many seconds. Suddenly he rose, took a step nearer and began speaking rapidly in a husky whisper.

"Miss Vandevere, listen! I'm going to tell you a secret. I have fallen heir to a fortune. I take the midnight train for Canada to claim the legacy. No one is to know of this until after I'm gone—not even Sterling. Will you come, too—away from this hateful life? You know I love you. Decide at once! There's no time for dallying. Say you'll come!"

The startled girl trembled in the hot breath of his passion. Every vestige of color left her face.

"It is—so—sudden," she faltered. "I must think it over. Give me time."

"I'll call at your boarding house at 10 o'clock. Be on the watch. And remember how much there is at stake. But I know I can trust you."

Betty's voice seemed to have dropped down into her throat. There was no response. A silence fell in which she could hear the muffled beating of her own heart.

That night Henderson was the first to leave. Sterling was in the room, and he could only give Betty a glance of mute appeal as he went out.

She crouched over her desk with blurred eyes. For a time there was no sound save the rustle of the paper Sterling pretended to read. At length, throwing it down, he crossed to her side.

"Still at work, Miss Vandevere?" he said, a new note in his big voice.

"I'll soon finish now," she answered without lifting her eyes. "Don't wait, please. I'll look up."

Betty heard him sigh as he went out.

Fastidiously locking the door on the inside, she withdrew the key and returned to her seat.

An hour dragged by. Now there were shadows everywhere. The corners were black with these. She felt a suffocating terror, as if the walls were contracting and might shut together and crush her.

Suddenly a key clicked in the lock. She had barely time to drop behind a chair before a man tiptoed into the office. As he passed by her hiding place the light from the street struck across his face. For a minute she ceased to breathe. He went hurriedly on to the inner room, and after a little while a gentle clicking told her that he was working the combination of the safe.

Now was her chance! Quaking with fright, she crept to the door opening on the landing. One quick step and she was outside. Then the unexpected happened. A flood of light suddenly illumined the darkness; she saw that the passage was full of policemen. And she had rushed straight into Tom Sterling's arms!

"You! Oh, I'm so glad!" she gasped hysterically. "Quick! The safe! You are being robbed, Henderson!"

But the men in blue had already dashed past into the office. There was the sound of a struggle, then a voice shrieking dreadful curses—the same voice she had once thought so cultured and refined.

"I overheard—this afternoon," Sterling said quietly. "I had grown suspicious before. If you really love him he shall go free."

"Love him? Oh, no, no," Betty cried with her face hidden on the big man's shoulder. "I didn't know until this afternoon whom I loved, but I do now!"

Making Things Clear.

An old Peabody worthy and an English lady were one day recently occupants of a railway carriage in an Edinburgh bound train. The train had been waiting long at a certain station, and there was no appearance of its starting, when the worthy remarked, "They are a gay fagsome lot here."

"I beg your pardon," said the lady.

"I'm sayin' they're an awfu' daidlin' squad here," said the old fellow.

"I really beg your pardon, sir," she rejoined.

"I'm remarkin' they're a vera dreich lot here the night," the old gentleman further ventured.

"Really, I must again beg your pardon," said the lady, with marked embarrassment, "but I do not comprehend you."

"I was just trying to say the train was late," he finally blurted.

"Indeed, sir, it is very late," agreed the lady.

And the conversation collapsed.—Dundee News.

A Martyr.

The Friend—If your married life is so unhappy, why don't you get a divorce from your husband? Unhappy Wife—Because he would then marry some other woman and make her unhappy.—Chicago News.

An Ungallant Actor.

A well known American actor, who is old enough not to consider himself a matinee idol by any means, was somewhat surprised and pleased in a St. Louis hotel a short time ago when a pretty girl stopped him in the corridor and presented him with a rose, without saying a word. He was more surprised and less pleased to receive a note the following day reminding him of the incident and asking him to send the giver of the flower two seats at the theater in which he was playing "as a memento of the occasion."

"My dear young lady," the actor replied, waxing sarcastic as he realized what had been the object of the attention he had been paid, "I would be glad to send you the seats you ask for, but, on consultation with the manager of the theater, I have been informed that the seats are all fastened down and that he is opposed to having them sent away as souvenirs in any event, so that you will have to be contented with an autograph for a souvenir of your benevolence of yesterday instead."—Harper's Weekly.

Limitations of Fame.

In Professor Knight's reminiscences of Tennyson it is related that on one occasion when the poet laureate was stopping at an inn in the island of Skye the landlord was asked if he knew who had been staying in his house, and on being informed that it was the poet Tennyson, he replied:

"Lor, to think o' that! And, sure, I thought he was shentleman."

At Stirling some one asked the landlord of the house where the poet was stopping:

"Do you ken who you had wi' you t'other night?"

"Naa, but he was a pleasant shentleman."

"It was Tennyson, the poet."

"And wha may he be?"

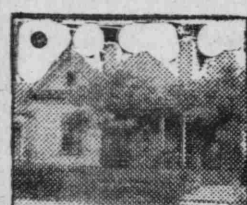
"Oh, he is a writer o' verses sich as ye see i' the papers!"

"Noo, to think o' that! Jest a pooblic writer, and I g'ed him ma best bedroom!"

But the charms of Mrs. Tennyson, her gracious manners, did not pass unnoticed, for the landlord said, "Oh, she was an angel!"

Snow and Rain.

The first man to whom it ever occurred to find out how much rain was represented by a given fall of snow was Alexander Briece of Kirknewton, who in March, 1765, made a simple experiment with the contents of a store jug driven face downward into over six inches of snow. What he learned was that a greater or less degree of cold or of wind when the snow falls and its "lying a longer or shorter time on the ground" will occasion a difference in the weight and in the quantity of water produced, "but if," he added, "I may trust to the above trials, which I endeavored to perform with care, snow newly fallen, with a moderate gale of wind, freezing cold, will produce a quantity of water equal to one-tenth part of its bulk." So that a fall of snow of ten inches represents a rainfall of one inch.—London Chronicle.

WHY PAY RENT?

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Little Rock, Ark.



Richmond, Va.



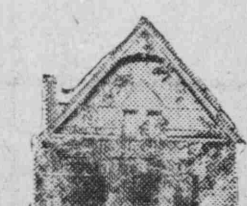
Meridian, Miss.



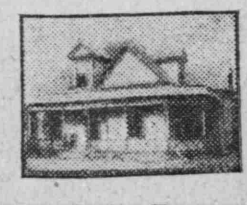
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